HOST ISSUES FOR HUGGINS' EMAIL FORM SCRIPT: AN EXCERPT FROM THE USER MANUAL

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for Version 2.2.2

James S. Huggins
The Eclectic Power Company

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Host Issues for Huggins Email Form Script: An Extract from the User Manual
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Revised for Huggins' Email Form Script Version 2.2.2.

NB: Small revisions to the script (e.g., bug fixes) may not necessitate a new version of the documentation. Check the website to determine current status of scripts and documentation.

To obtain the current version of the script and documentation, go to
www.JamesSHuggins.com/huggins-email-form-script

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT I

TABLE OF CONTENTS II

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT 3
- Overview 3

HOST ISSUES 4
- Overview 4
- General Limitations on PHP **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Specific Examples **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - easycgi.com **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - bluerazor.com **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - M6.net **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - Gate.com **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - Godaddy.com **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - FastHosts.co.uk **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- The .php5 Issue **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Testing Your Host **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- What Do People Do? **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - A Use of a USofA Host **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
  - European Hosts **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

THE ECLECTIC POWER COMPANY 11
- James S. Huggins 11
- The Eclectic Power Company 11
- Contact Information 11

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

OVERVIEW

This document is an excerpt from the User Manual for Huggins' Email Form Script, publication 5-01-xxx.

This basic web page for this script is:
http://JSH.us/hefs

This document discusses hosting issues which users of the script have encountered, particularly with some specific internet hosting services.

HOST ISSUES

OVERVIEW

Through the testing done by volunteer beta testers, I have identified some of the problems you may encounter with Huggins' Email Form Script.

This section attempts to document some of those problems and assist with their resolution.

GENERAL LIMITATIONS ON PHP

Although PHP is more and more common, support for PHP is far from universal. And even hosts which support PHP may not support all of PHP.

For example, some web hosts

- Have not implemented PHP,
- Have not implemented it completely,
- Have disabled some functions of PHP,
- Require that PHP scripts be placed in specific directories, or
- Impose arbitrary limits on the use of PHP.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

This subsection presents some specific examples of these problems[1] for:

- EasyCGI.com
- BlueRazor.com
- M6.net
- Gate.com
- GoDaddy.com
- FastHosts.co.uk

[1] I would *love* to have more specific examples. If you encounter specific example, please document them in detail and send them to me at JHuggins@JamesSHuggins.com or JHuggins@EclecticPower.com.

EASYCGI.COM

Despite its name, this web host (www.EasyCGI.com) does not appear to support the ability of an invoked script to use the PHP mail function. All requests for assistance from the host tech support returned a standard answer: that their test PHP script worked. Unfortunately, their test PHP script did not include Form Posting or email sending functionality and their tech support seemed unwilling to address this issue.

BLUERAZOR.COM

- This web host (BlueRazor.com) had a number of limitations[2]
- They disabled some PHP functions on Linux accounts
- They disabled other PHP functions on Windows accounts
- They limited emails to 1000 per month
- They had some contradictory information in their help files. For example, their article on limiting PHP functions on Linux accounts said they had ***disabled*** the "mail" function. But the article on the 1000 email per month limit said they had ***enabled*** the "mail" function.

Again, things have changed since these issues were encountered, but these issues are some examples of the type of limitation users must look for.

M6.NET

This host specializes in Windows Server hosting.

I registered the domain name WindowsPHPTest.com and paid for an account on M6.net specifically to test Windows Server hosting. Their help desk was responsive and made great attempts. I have good praise for their attitude and timeliness. However, despite their valiant efforts, they were unable to create an environment in which my test scripts were able to send emails. And they were unable to explain why. [3]

One of the possible reasons for this is that, generally, individuals with skills in Windows Servers do not have skills using PHP.

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[2] Some of these have changed since this was initially explored with BlueRazor.com. For example, recent checking indicates that the Linux problems may have been fixed. However, they have completely removed PHP support for Windows Servers and suggest that you move to a Linux server if you need PHP. The description of these issues is not intended to suggest that BlueRazor.com is not suitable as a host for your particular requirements, but only to describe my individual experiences.

[3] The description of these issues is not intended to suggest that M6.net is not suitable as a host for your particular requirements, but only to describe my individual experiences.

GATE.COM

One of the users of my script, Clo Knibbe[4] encountered this problem.[5] He reported that on the support page on their host[6] it says:

> Due to anti-spam prevention measures, Gate.com mail forms will only send to Gate.com mailboxes on your domain. This disables the ability to exploit a script. The scripts will not send to an external address.

In addition all emails sent through the script on his site are sent with a common "from address" despite the script's attempt to use a specific, custom "from address".

GODADDY.COM

In her testimonial to me,[7] Joyce Cimbalista wrote "I just completed implementing your script on a site, and will definitely be using it on others (except for the one on GoDaddy, which I found disallows the php mail function)."

I have not yet been able to find confirmation on the GoDaddy.com site, but it is still one more example of hosting issues[8].

FASTHOSTS.CO.UK

A user attempting to use the script on FastHosts.co.uk wrote me in May 2009 having received this error from the host.

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[4] He also wrote a nice testimonial about this manual. See **Error! Reference source not found.** on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

[5] This was in May of 2008.

[6] http://kb.gate.com/display/2/index.asp?c=&cpc=&cid=&cat=&catURL=&r=0.971081

[7] See **Error! Reference source not found.** on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

[8] As of Jun.2009 I have not been able to confirm this problem, and, in fact, I know of some people successfully using this script on GoDaddy.

> ** The email is not generated as 'from' a Fasthosts registered email address. Because the email is sent from our SMTP server, you will need to ensure that it is sent from a Fasthosts mailbox so that it can authenticate through the server. This will also need to be included in the 'ini_set' line of your script (eg - ini_set('sendmail_from', "info@bala-backpackers.co.uk");)*
>
> ** The '-f' parameter has not been included. When creating the email in the script, you will have a line similar to :*
>
> *$sent = mail($email_to, $email_subject, $message, $headers);*
>
> *An extra parameter must be added to the end of this line, defining the fro address as below :*
>
> *$sent = mail($email_to, $email_subject, $message, $headers, '-f'$email_from);*
>
> *I understand that your scripts will not read exactly as the above lines, but these lines define the minimum required information needed to send an email through our system. More information can be found at:*
>
> *http://www.fasthosts.co.uk/knowledge-base/?article_id=1077*

In other words, they are saying that my script will ***not*** work on their host.

In response I wrote this host attempting to get a reply and clarification to confirm this. They first declined to clarify and advised me directly that they will ***not*** help me clarify because I am not a customer.

They wrote "This is most definitely a support enquiry - for specifics into what our scripting supports, or issues with scripting on our servers please email support@fasthosts.co.uk with your account credentials." This was a tad difficult since I am not one of their customers. However, after a bit of correspondence over a couple days, they did eventually phone me from UK to my home/office here in the colonies (USofA) to clarify.

Based on this telephone response, it seems that unlike many commercial web hosts (see below for examples), they are not equipped to offer the services required by my script as a part of their standard basic package offerings. However, if someone requires it, for an additional charge, they can offer an option of additional services (e.g., an additional server) at an additional price to accommodate my script.

For these reasons, it appears to me (my opinion) that using my script on this host is not an optimum option for most users and that use of alternate hosting services (either in addition to ***or*** instead of this host; see below) will provide the services my script requires at significant cost savings.

If this an issue for you, do not hesitate to contact me:

JHuggins@JamesSHuggins.com
or
JHuggins@EclecticPower.com.

THE .PHP5 ISSUE

The script you download from my site has a file type of ".php5". Many servers cannot handle this file type. If your server indicates that the script file cannot be posted to, change the name to have a file type of ".php". You will need to change the name of the script you store and also change the name of the script to match, in the html execution files you create.

TESTING YOUR HOST

In the effort to assist some beta testers with installation and use of the Huggins' Email Form Script, I have identified some problems and developed pages and scripts to help test the host.

For more information on these, see the section **Error! Reference source not found.** on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

WHAT DO PEOPLE DO?

There are a few things that well meaning hosts do to make life difficult.

For ***many*** people these are showstoppers … for example, these well meaning hosts may send a confirming copy to the user. Some hosts also prohibit the email to the site owner from "coming from" the user. This prohibits just using a simple "reply" to communicate back.

But there is a simple, though brute force workaround. Some people using my script have purchased an account on a more permissive server … just to host and use the script!! They keep their site on the old host but invoke the script on the new host. For a surprising number of people this brute force work around actually ***works***!!

Others have moved their whole site and written a rather brutal email to the host.

A USE OF A USOFA HOST

Here is one plan you might consider if you are in the USofA:

1and1.com
http://www.1and1.com/?k_id=8237010
$3.99/month - $47.88/year
Includes hosting for up to 20 domains for 20 different websites![9]

NB: I use 1and1 for all my own hosting and I am also an "affiliate" so if you use this link to buy your hosting, I make a small percentage.[10] It does not increase your cost.

If you encounter this kind of problem, please let me know. I'd love to help however I can.

EUROPEAN HOSTS

I asked my users to tell me what European hosts they use so that I can offer some suggestions. I offer a few of those responses here, but note that I have no personal experience with them.

hostpapa.co.uk from Phil L. (Phil@Justice4Kate.com)

I can recommend hostpapa.co.uk. I've used them for a couple of years and found them reliable, inexpensive and when there has been the odd problem they have sorted them quick with a really good free phone helpline although I understand they are based in Canada. Your script works great with them.

www.blackfoot.co.uk from Neil Lemon (NeilLemon@googlemail.com]

I am a UK user of your wonderful script and I too originally encountered a problem with Fasthosts all of about 18 months ago. Since then I have been using http://www.blackfoot.co.uk and have never had an issue with your script working perfectly. They do not offer telephone support and their hosting is pretty basic (all shared servers) but when I have had an issue my emails have been responded to and more importantly sorted within minutes. They are pretty cheap and the servers are based here in the UK which is good for me as the companies I make websites for are also based over here. If your user is looking for a cheap solution and doesn't need their hand held with telephone support I can't think of a better company.

and again from Leah Taylor (info@lanternwebdesign.co.uk)

I use Blackfoot (www.blackfoot.co.uk) who are very good and have excellent support. I have also implemented your form with no problems on their servers.

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[9] I last confirmed this pricing on 05.May.2009.

[10] I am also a user of NameCheap.com for Domain Name Registration and use them exclusively for all my domain name registrations. I strongly recommend them: www.NameCheap.com and here are some coupons for discounts: www.NameCheapCoupon.com

www.hostpoint.ch from W. Louis (WLouis@CalTechNix.com.mx)

I use www.hostpoint.ch. My experience is excellent service.

www.1and1.co.uk from David Crowe (David.CROWE@coe.int)

I am very satisfied with my hosting company, 1 and 1.

For UK based users, they are at www.1and1.co.uk. They trade also as 1and1.fr , 1und1.de (and 1and1.com internationally). Physical storage is in Karlsruhe, Germany.

www.heartinternet.co.uk from Rob Knight (Rob@Net-Results.co.uk)

I use Heart Internet: www.heartinternet.co.uk. We know your script works there, 'cos we've got it running. Just needs a PHP5 set in the htaccess file.

JAMES S. HUGGINS

James S. Huggins is an eclecticist: a business coach, author, writer, technologist, trainer and professional speaker. Through James' consulting firm, The Eclectic Power Company, he provides a variety of professional services, primarily to sole proprietorships, professional practitioners and small businesses.

James' experience combines more than 30 years in information technology with demonstrated excellence in training, professional speaking, sales, sales support, business development, writing, television, project management, individual coaching, team facilitation and consulting.

James' areas of specialization include:

- Internet Marketing,
- Search Engine Optimization,
- Book and Manual Development,
- White Paper Development,
- Ezine Management,
- Audio Product Development and
- Business Development Coaching

James currently serves as the primary writer for Juanell Teague (www.JuanellTeague.com) and as the "third man" in her one-on-one consulting work with her clients. James also co-authors white papers and articles with Juanell, provides overall information technology strategy and implementation and acts as coordinating producer for her conferences and seminars.

James was a Microsoft MVP (2003-2009) for their FrontPage website development and management software. He is a moderator of two FrontPage lists, an Expression Web forum, and SEO Techniques discussion lists. He has presented sessions on Internet Marketing for professional speakers.

THE ECLECTIC POWER COMPANY

The Eclectic Power Company is built on two simple concepts: first, that many people do not have just one talent, but several, and second, that there is power in the synthesis of different, complimentary talents.

Drawing on the multifaceted expertise of the founder, Eclectic Power supplements its strengths with associates and partners, both long term and project based, to fulfill the needs of the client.

CONTACT INFORMATION

James S. Huggins
The Eclectic Power Company
Post Office Box 58266
Houston, Texas 77258-8266

281 . 488 . 5820
fax: 270 . 596 . 0140
www.EclecticPower.com
JHuggins@EclecticPower.com